United Nations S/PV.6703

Security Council

Sixty-seventh year

Provisional

6703rd meeting

Monday, 16 January 2012, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Sangqu	(South Africa)
Members:	Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
	India	Mr. Kumar
	Morocco	Mr. Loulichki
	Pakistan	Mr. Tarar
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zhukov
	Togo	Mr. Menan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Sheard
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2011/811)

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12-20721 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (S/2011/811)

The President: Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/811, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

Mr. Djinnit (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to present to the Council the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), for the period from 1 July to 31 December 2011.

Since my most recent briefing to the Security Council, in July 2011 (see S/PV.6577), the situation in West Africa has seen positive developments. During the reporting period, the subregion witnessed no recurrence of open conflict, and tensions related to internal institutional or political crises decreased in both number and intensity. In addition, a number of countries of the subregion held elections that were judged credible by the international community, thereby averting potential electoral crises and any resulting destabilization.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the countries of West Africa; to their organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); and to all other stakeholders, including civil society and women in particular, for their efforts to consolidate stability in the subregion. I also welcome the role of the United Nations and the contribution — which is most appreciated — that it has made through its various offices in the subregion in supporting the efforts of the West African countries.

Nevertheless, the situation continues to call for caution, as the progress made remains tenuous. As recent events in Guinea-Bissau have shown, the countries of the subregion are not immune from incidents that could jeopardize the progress made in peacebuilding, democracy and stability. Likewise, worrisome developments are possible, including an upswing in the activities of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria, which would pose a grave threat to peace and security in that country, which is of pivotal importance to Africa. We must hope that Nigeria will independently manage to find the resources necessary to tackle the challenges facing it at both the security and political levels. It is also important for the international community to demonstrate its support and solidarity vis-à-vis that country, which has contributed so much to regional and international peace and security.

In that context of tenuous progress, the successful conclusion of the current processes of political dialogue and national reconciliation in the countries of the subregion, particularly in Togo, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, will be decisive in ensuring that the progress made by West Africa in the area of peace and democracy is lasting.

It is encouraging to note the launching of a process of dialogue between the principal political stakeholders in Guinea on 27 December last, after the Government agreed to temporarily suspend the activities of the Independent National Electoral Commission, as requested by the opposition. It is important that national protagonists, including the opposition, demonstrate flexibility so as to swiftly reach agreement on arrangements that would allow for the holding of legislative elections as soon as possible.

While the countries of West Africa were spared violent conflicts and crises during the recent period, they have nevertheless had to tackle a re-emergence of transborder threats. The significant increase in the number of acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea during the reporting period poses a fresh threat to the security and development of the States of the region.

The Secretary-General sent an inter-agency mission to the subregion from 7 to 24 November with a view to determining the scope of the threat and to identifying actions that the United Nations and other

partners could undertake so as to support the countries facing that scourge. During that visit, it became clear to mission participants that regional cooperation should be facilitated through the participation of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Gulf of Guinea Commission, and the support of the United Nations and the international community. Here I should like to stress the imperative need to strengthen cooperation on the part of various institutions at the national level so as to maximize the impact of their efforts to combat the growing threat of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The humanitarian and security consequences of the Libyan crisis remain a major source of concern, as they have aggravated chronic instability in the subregion, particularly in the countries of the Sahel. The leaders whom I met during a visit I undertook to the Sahel region in October 2011, in particular the Presidents of Mali and of the Niger, underscored the fact that their countries — which were already facing significant challenges, including cyclical drought, food insecurity, youth unemployment and insecurity in the northern parts of their countries — are today having to shoulder a new burden of socio-economic and security problems resulting from the Libyan crisis. They expressed the hope that the United Nations would provide additional support to them in facing those challenges, particularly in terms of the reintegration of returnees. It is in that context that the Secretary-General dispatched an inter-agency assessment mission to the region from 7 to 23 December, with a view to recording the concerns of the region in the wake of the Libyan crisis and to recommending measures aimed at bolstering United Nations support and assistance to those countries.

All of the efforts made to consolidate subregional security and stability could come to nought if the scourge of drug trafficking and organized crime, which is undermining State institutions and already fragile societies in West Africa, is not combated with sustained determination. In that respect, increased political mobilization and strengthened, whole-hearted cooperation are imperative at the level of production, transit and destination countries. The United Nations will remain committed, along with ECOWAS and the countries of the subregion, to promote an effective response to illicit drug trafficking, organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa.

Instability arising from elections is another major challenge to the countries of the subregion. Priority attention should continue to be given to the electoral processes in the subregion and their political implications for elections taking place in 2012 and 2013. In that regard, in addition to the legislative elections that should complete the transition process in Guinea, I am thinking in particular of the presidential elections scheduled to take place in Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

I am gratified by the ownership assumed, in particular by civil society, of the recommendations contained in the Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa adopted at the end of the regional conference organized in Praia, Cape Verde, by the United Nations Office for West Africa in May 2011. The Bamako Declaration and its strategic framework, adopted on 4 December 2011 at the regional conference on impunity, justice and human rights, provide a new framework for strengthening good governance and the rule of law in the countries of the subregion, in support of the implementation of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the efforts of the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

Building on the success of the Praia and Bamako conferences, the United Nations Office for West Africa intends to organize, whenever necessary and in close cooperation with ECOWAS, the United Nations system and other partners, regional conferences on cross-cutting themes in order to make the best use of the experiences and good practices of West African States, thereby contributing to the development of policy norms. Such conferences would dynamically and constructively promote the efforts of the countries of the subregion towards peacebuilding, democracy and conflict prevention, and foster synergy between the operational work of the actors on the ground and policymaking in the various realms of intervention.

In conclusion, I would stress that, in the coming months, the United Nations Office for West Africa will continue to mobilize the United Nations system and to strengthen its partnerships with regional and subregional organizations — in particular ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, the African Union and civil society, especially women — so as to better consolidate the achievements that have been made in West Africa and prevent conflicts and crises that could

slow the subregion's decisive progress towards peace, democracy and development.

The President: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.